

PPC vs. SEO

Search Engine Marketing
- Go Organic This Christmas!

Released ; 6/7/05

Is your web site ready for the Christmas rush?

Making a web site succeed is indeed a tricky business. The Internet is flooded with an overwhelming amount of promotional offers aimed at making you get rich quickly. Selecting an approach that will work for your web site can be a very difficult decision. Over my years involved in Internet promotion, I have dealt with thousands of businesses all focused on achieving maximum exposure for their web sites. Standing clearly from the crowd of promotional options is one winner - search engine marketing, or SEM.

With Christmas fast approaching, SEM will be playing a vital role for the promotion of many retail web sites. There are 2 options available when using SEM - Paid and Organic. Paid SEM requires direct payment to a search engine for results. Organic SEM involves paying a specialist to accelerate your web site's climb in the natural search results. While Organic SEM takes longer to achieve, the rewards are well worth waiting for.

The difference between paid and organic results can be illustrated by visiting Google.com.au and entering a search for 'Christmas shopping' (see Figure 1). Paid results are visible to the right hand side of the screen. Organic results appear to the left.



Figure 1 - Google.com.au search results for 'Christmas shopping' (06/07/05)

An interesting study by Eyetools Inc. recently revealed that Google users are 2 times more likely to view natural results over paid results (Adwords). Appearing in the top positions naturally will therefore ensure that you are achieving the maximum exposure possible for your web site.

Although it receives less exposure, Google Adwords can be a very valuable tool in providing immediate traffic benefits for your site. In a matter of minutes, your Ad will be visible to Google users. While writing this article, I took a moment to set up a Google Adwords campaign for NetRegistry targeting 'Christmas shopping'.

In less than 5 minutes, NetRegistry appeared in the number 1 position for the paid results. To achieve the number 1 position for the 'Christmas shopping' search on Google.com.au, I had to agree to an average of \$1.50 per click when anyone clicked my Ad. In comparison, if I wanted to target the number 1 position for 'web hosting', I would need to agree to pay an average of \$10 per click.

Adwords is a great way to kick off your search engine campaign however over time this form of SEM can prove too expensive for many businesses to maintain. For long term viability, every web site needs to consider Organic SEM. This option will prove to be the more affordable long term option for achieving search engine exposure. The time to achieve results using Organic SEM can vary. In 4 months, existing web sites on average should be seeing good results using Organic SEM. New sites need at least 6 months before good results can be achieved.

The process of elevating a web site organically is commonly referred to in the industry as search engine optimisation, or SEO. A specialist in SEO will understand how search engines build top results. A SEO specialist will work at improving your web sites ability to communicate with search engines in addition to establishing a strong network with other web sites within your industry.

To demonstrate the benefits of search engine optimisation lets compare our Paid to Organic SEM for 'web hosting' on Google.com.au. For the cost of 90 Adword clicks for 'web hosting', NetRegistry was able to pay for 6 months of search engine optimisation. After 6 months of search engine optimisation Netregistry.com.au moved into a top 3 position for 'web hosting' on Google.com.au. This top 3 position now results in 1000's of clicks every month for NetRegistry. The monthly cost to maintain this position is the same as paying for 15 Adwords clicks.

If you haven't started search engine optimisation already, you will need to get going now to make the Christmas rush. Don't be caught out like many retail businesses last year who thought that November was a good time to start. They were simply too late and they missed their window to make online sales boom.

If your alarm bells are ringing and you've decided to get started with search engine optimisation, here's what you need to do now:

Make a decision on a SEO Company within the next 2 weeks.

Select a SEO company that has a proven track record of success. There are many SEO companies to choose from, however there is also an alarming majority that have no good results behind them - choose wisely! Make sure that your SEO Company is not going to take your left leg as payment for the SEO. There is a huge range in pricing and there are many cases where the same service can cost 5 times as much with a different SEO company. Again, do your research - shop around for the best deal!

Check that your SEO Company will be following the guidelines provided by Google at <http://www.google.com/webmasters/seo.html>. These are great guidelines that cover the major issues with search engine optimisation.

Making the decision to go with Organic SEM could be the best business decision you will ever make. Do your research today and start moving towards greater exposure for your web site.

References:

Eyetoools Eyetracking Google Research

http://www.eyetoools.com/inpage/research_google_eyetracking_heatmap.htm